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Jammu and Kashmir's Dogra dynasty: a cultural analysis of food and dress (1846–1947)

Hilal Ahmad Tantray

Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

ABSTRACT

The Dogra dynasty (1846–1947) in Jammu and Kashmir created a distinctive cultural environment in which food and dress mirrored the region's socio-political, religious, and economic dynamics. This study argues that dietary habits and apparel during the Dogra reign were more than just markers of identity; they represented a combination of tradition and external influences formed by trade, migration, and royal patronage. The Dogra nobles dressed elaborately to establish their control and adhere to Rajput traditions, while the general public wore utilitarian and region-specific clothing. Similarly, regional cuisine, defined by different ingredients and preparation techniques, reflects the agrarian economy and blending of Dogra, Kashmiri, and Mughal culinary habits. This paper also shows how nutrition and dress standards reflect caste, gender hierarchy, and socio-economic institutions. Dogras introduced contemporary fabrics and processed meals, which indirectly promoted commerce and globalization. By studying food and dress culture, this research shows how material culture negotiates tradition and modernity in Jammu and Kashmir.

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Introduction

No particular food or clothing is exclusive to India. The vast range of cuisines collectively known as Indian cuisine is the product of the country's many climates, soil types, civilizations, and religious beliefs, as well as the influences introduced from other countries. In general, the origins of Indian cuisine can be traced back on the prehistoric times, and it is present in regions worldwide with a significant Indian diaspora. The Jammu and Kashmir region, which is located in the Northern most part of India, is renowned for its breathtaking natural beauty and diverse physical features. This region is divided into three distinct regions: Jammu, which is characterized by subtropical plains and Shivalik hills; Kashmir Valley, which is well-known for its verdant meadows, lakes, and snow-capped peaks; and Ladakh, which is a cold desert region with rough terrain and high-altitude lakes. The climate in this region is quite varied: Jammu has hot summers and moderate winters, Kashmir experiences pleasant summers and snowy winters, and Ladakh remains chilly throughout the year, (Raina, 1971). The valley's vibrant beauty is brought to life throughout the spring and autumn seasons, making it a well-known destination known for its landscapes and seasonal variations.

Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh possess different cuisines and dressing styles owing to their varying climates. In Jammu, individuals wear lightweight cotton attire and eat simple meals, including rice and wheat-based dishes, during the sweltering summers, whereas woolen garments are donned in winter. The cold climate of Kashmir affects both attire and cuisine. People utilize *kangri*[1] for additional warmth and wear *pherans*[2] for insulation. To survive severe winters, people traditionally eat rich food, (Hassan, 2014), comprising meat-based dishes from *wazwan*[3] and preserved vegetables. In Ladakh, where temperatures are particularly frigid, individuals don heavy woolen *gonchas* for warmth. Their diet includes high-energy foods, such as butter tea and *thukpa*, which enable them to withstand the severe climate. These adaptations reflect the close connection between climate and daily existence in these areas.

CONTACT Hilal Ahmad Tantray hilalmohiuddin614@gmail.com Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

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The Dogra dynasty served as a bridge between diverse cultural influences, blending local Kashmiri traditions with external elements, such as Punjabi, Central Asia, and Mughal styles in food and dress. This syncretism not only reflected the region's unique identity, but also helped consolidate the authority of the Dogra rulers over a multi-ethnic population. The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was established by Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of the Dogra dynasty, in 1846 (Ram, 1977; Panikkar, 1930). The Dogra dynasty, famous for its extravagant banquets had a significant impact on the cuisine of Kashmir, which is renowned for its opulent and fragrant flavors and the use of spices, such as cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, saffron, fennel, turmeric, and chilies. The food and dress were used by Dogra rulers as tools of cultural diplomacy and political legitimization to strengthen their control over Jammu and Kashmir. The dining habits of the Dogra royal dynasty in Jammu and Kashmir were formed by their Hindu Rajput genealogy, regional influences, and interactions with other cultures. While they consumed meat, they were not primarily meat-eaters. Their cuisine reflected a balance between vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, with a strong emphasis on traditional Dogra and North Indian food, alongside some Kashmiri and Mughal influences. Delicacies such as *Yakhani Shorba, Rogan Josh, Gushtaba, Dum Aloo,* and *Shami Kabab*, along with other similar dishes, are known to satisfy the taste buds of monarchs and are emblematic of the region (Tantray, 2024).

Kashmiri culture and music mix nicely in the Coke Studio Bharat song '*Kya Karie Korimol*' (Coke Studio Bharat, 2024). The music captures the essence of Kashmir through its traditional components. The song focuses on the Kashmiri wedding feast, *Wazwan,* which is a multi-course meal that represents hospitality and community, making it an important aspect of Kashmiri identity. *Wanwun*, a traditional kind of Kashmiri wedding music, is prominently featured in the song (Fayaz, 2001). The second half of the song features typical joyful tunes and lyrics. *Wanwun,* sung during Kashmiri weddings, bestows blessings to the couple and creates a celebratory environment. Throughout the song, *pherans* and embroidered shawls depict Kashmiri culture, showcasing the elegance and complexity of Kashmiri dress. The lyrics also mention traditional ornaments, which expand the cultural tapestry depicted in the song.

The Dogra dynasty was instrumental in preserving and institutionalizing indigenous Kashmiri culinary and dress traditions, ensuring their continuity throughout generations while absorbing external influences. Gender influenced the cultural dynamics of cuisine and attire under the Dogra dynasty, mirroring greater socio-political inequalities, with different responsibilities and expectations for men and women.

Dress under the Dogras

The Dogra court garb consisted of a turban and a tight *churidar pyjamas*. The middle class people would wear a loose turban on their heads. Women were dressed in loose kurtas and multi-coloured *churidars,* shalwars in the Mughal style. According to Hugel, the customs of these women differ from those of the women in Sikh districts along the vast banks of the Sutlej. The younger ones wore blue pants that fit extremely close to the leg below the knee, from the calf to the ankle, and fall in countless folds. Over these, they wear an ample-petticoat and above that, a white cloth flows down behind them, flattering in the wind. Women at home wore a long white cloth over their bodies called *Giddi* in local culture (Hugel, 1972). *Pyjamas*, a pair of pants that fit snugly, and a white or chintz cotton shirt that reached the knees were the two items of clothing that were considered to be the standard attire for the upper-class men who lived in the Dogra area. In addition to the shirt, it was common practice to wear a sophisticated jacket that was not only crafted from silk or colored cotton cloth but also adorned with embroidery and lined with fur during the winter (Kapur, 1992). Short breeches, known as the *Kuch*, were worn by members of the agricultural classes in place of pants, and sleeveless jackets were worn in place of shirts. A *postin,* also known as a short-sleeved sheepskin coat, was typically worn by Dogra peasants during winters (Enriquez, 1915). The western attire, especially the pants, coats, shirts and the patent leather made shoes, were also being worn by certain people of significant social standing. (Neve, 1915).

Another noticeable change in dress was the adoption of hats (Census Report of Jammu & Kashmir, 1931), and fur caps, which gradually replaced the turban (*Dastar*) (Lawrence, 1895). Fur caps were worn only by the well-to-do, who could afford their high prices. English attire became more prevalent among the educated classes (Biscoe, 1922). Skull caps were the typical headwear worn by common Dogras. *Turbans*, on the other hand, were worn by men of higher social strata and came in a different styles and

colors. One type, known as *Pagri*, was wrapped tightly around the head and was usually red in color. The other type, called *Safa*, was typically styled with large folds over the right ear. It was usually white but was occasionally dyed in various colors, most often pink or saffron, for special occasions. These garments were made of wool in winter and cotton in summer. Villagers also typically carried a length of home-made cloth called *Loie*. Additionally, it was embellished with thin bands of gold and tinsel wrapped around edges (Bingley, 2020).

During various gatherings, Dogra women wore gowns with long skirts. They covered their heads with a *Chadar*, which literally translates to 'cloth'. Generally, these garments were made from muslin in various colors. Ornaments worn on the forehead were the most favored (Drew, 1877). Indigo was commonly used to dye white clothing, a popular practice even in villages within the Dogra region. Men of the middle mountainous areas typically wore thick woolen fabric in a light gray color. However, in some regions, people wore short coats made from this material, while in others, the coats were long and flowing. In addition, they wore a *Kamarband* (waistband) and country belts. Their pants, known as *pyjamas*, were loose up to the knees but fitted below. Women also wore long gowns with a *Kamarband*. In many settings, they even wore small caps on their heads (Rothfeld, 1918). The hill people typically wore grass shoes. However, these shoes were merely soles with a broad band between the big toe and the other toes. The band extended loosely on both sides of the sole, leaving the heel unbound. Through regular practice, however, the wearers kept the shoes firmly attached to their feet (Rothfeld, 1918).

During winters, the people of Kashmir wore *Pheran* made of woolen cloth to keep themselves warm. The usual dress for both men and women consisted of a pair of drawers and a long, loosely fitting robe called the *Pheran* (Neve, 1915). The sleeves were folded to avoid obstruction while working. Muslim women wore *Pherans* slightly shorter than those worn by men. Additionally, women's *Pheran* were often brocaded near the collar in gold, silk, or cotton, depending on the family's social status. A *Pheran* typically consisted of two garments of equal size. The inner garment, known as *Pochh,* was invariably made of *Khadar* or cotton cloth, while the outer garment was comparatively more expensive. The outer fabric varied and could be *Chhint*, rayon silk, poplin, or Kashmira. The voluminous *Pheran* was particularly suited for *Kangar* users. When seated, they could place the fire pot between their legs, creating an effective source of warmth. The *Pheran's* collar and cuffs were always white, regardless of the color of the garment itself. However, when the rest of the *Pheran* was white or gray, the cuffs were typically colored (Petrocokino, 1920).

It was in the 1930s that Pandit Kashyap Bandhu, a great social reformer, led a crusade against the use of the *Pheran*, as it was considered 'effeminate' (Bazaz, 2011). This shift in perception was driven by education and the valley's increasing exposure to the outside world. As a result of Kashyap Bandhu's efforts, the *Pheran* gradually disappeared among many Pandit families (The Ranbir, 1932). Although some educated Kashmiri Pandits and upper-class, literate Muslim families abandoned the *Pheran*, it remained widely used among the general population. In recent times, there has been a revival of the *Pheran*, now worn by both men and women, albeit in distinct styles. Interestingly, even women from non-Kashmiri backgrounds have begun adopting its modernized version.

Ordinary people generally walked barefoot, and when shoes were worn by them, they were made of rough, untanned hide, wood, or plaited grass. The grass shoes, known as *Palahru*,[4] were considered 'the very best footgear for mountain work'. During winter, when long journeys were undertaken on foot, men wrapped their legs with two pieces of coarse woolen cloth called *Paraw*, measuring about four yards in length and six in width (Gordon, 1803). However, this practice quickly faded as the need for long foot journeys declined with the advent of vehicular transport.

Kashmiri Pandits avoided leather due to religious beliefs until the first quarter of the 20th century. As a result, they used wooden clogs *(Kharavas)* instead of leather shoes (Biscoe, 1922). In contrast, Muslims wore both leather shoes and wooden clogs. On wedding days, they donned horse or mule skin shoes adorned with silk embroidery for such special occasions (Bates, 1873). Over time, literate Pandits increasingly abandoned *Kharavas.*

Under Maharaja Ranbir Singh, (1857–1885) several Pandit families returned to Srinagar after having relocated to India. After a century-long absence from Kashmir, they had undergone significant cultural transformations. Although they remained steadfast in their traditional dress and language, they were no longer considered purely Kashmiri. Historian Jai Lal Kilam noted that Dewan Badri Nath was among the

first to return, eventually becoming the governor of Kashmir in 1877. 'Several Pandits from outside Kashmir joined him' (Kilam, 1955).

Dress of women

One common dress among the Pandit women was *lungi*. This was a long piece of cotton cloth, and worn around the waists over the *pheran*. Pandit woman never used to left her home without this girdle. This piece of dress did not find favor with those who discarded the *pheran*. Women generally adorned themselves with elegant earrings, nose rings, anklets, and bracelets. Their style of dressing the hair was 'peculiar'. As Major Bates notes: 'It is drawn to the back of the head and finely braided; the braids are then gathered together, and being mixed with coarse woolen thread, they are worked into a very long plait, which is terminated by a thick tassel (*gandapan*) which reaches down to the loins' (Bates, 1873). This complicated practice known as '*wankapan*' slowly disappeared with the increasing education among girls. Previously, the girls used to apply raw butter to their hair, but they developed a hatred for this practice when they began to use cosmetics.

The headdress was a six-yard embroidered cloth that covered the head and extended down to the ankles. The *Salu* was a blood-red Khadi cloth adorned with floral patterns, traditionally woven by the bride after marriage. The *Churidar Suthan* was a silk or linen garment with multiple folds, fastened around the waist with a silk or cotton string. It was worn over a snug-fitting *Suthan*. Ladakhi woman typically wore a variety of garments, including a long gown, a sheepskin *Choga*, and a petticoat. The petticoat was made of rough, brown-colored homespun fabric, woven in narrow strips about a foot wide. These strips, sometimes featuring red and blue lines, were sewn together to form a petticoat or skirt. Like men, women also wore a girdle around their waist, from which hung a large brass or gold disc, suspending household keys and various toiletry instruments. On her feet, she wore boots made of thick cloth with upturned toes. These boots extended halfway up her legs.

Muslim woman wore a small cap or veil, often adorned with a gold ornament or a cluster of turquoises. The hair of a Ladakhi woman was plaited into numerous thin strands, which were lengthened with the addition of yak hair (Darrah, 1898). However, while an unmarried woman braided her plaits with a white string, a married woman used a black string. This hairdressing process was time-consuming and was likely done only once a year (Gompertz, 2000).

The Dogras wove *Khadi* and other types of fabric by hand to create their garments in various styles. Artistically brocaded and embroidered bodices, tight-fitting trousers, and long, loosely flowing circular skirts called *Ghagra* lent Dogra women a natural grace and modesty, giving their walk a gliding appearance. Even ordinary women demonstrated remarkable skill in embroidery. Dogra women adorned their garments with silver and gold threads in intricate patterns, giving them a dazzling, ornate appearance (Wakhlu, 1998).

Girls usually wore skullcaps. After marriage, Muslim women wore a thicker, turban-like red cap called *Qasaba*, 'studded with innumerable pins, and over it, a spare piece of country cloth *(Pooch)* to act, in case of necessity, as a veil, which also usually covered the whole back' (Bazaz, 2011). *Taranga* (a well-set white round turban) was the traditional headwear of Pandit women. However, contact with Punjabi Hindu and Muslim women, influenced the attire of Kashmiri women. *Qasaba* and *Taranga* were replaced by *Dupatta*, also *Shalwar, Churidar Pyjama*, and Frock were preferred as they allowed greater activity. Upper-class Pandit women adopted the *Saree*, a trend popularized by Kashyap Bandhu (Bazaz, 2011). Meanwhile, women in Kashmir traditionally wore *Burqas*. A large cotton fabric draped over the head and down the back, and served as an additional covering. However, *Burqas* were worn exclusively by Muslim women. Working-class Muslim women, such as *Hanjis* and *Watals*, did not wear *Burqas* (Petrocokino, 1920).

The Buddhist women of Ladakh wore distinctive attire. The *Perak* was a stiff red fabric that covered the forehead and extended down the back. Their ears were protected from the cold by two large black sheepskin covers. From behind, these flaps gave the *Perak* the appearance of a bear's head. The *Perak* was especially known for being adorned with Chinese or Indian turquoise stones. Some women spent their fortunes on turquoises, which became larger and finer as they grew wealthier (Gompertz, 2000). A typical *Perak* was about two feet long and eight inches wide. However, a high-quality *Perak* could sometimes exceed three feet in length and nine inches in width, and it was valued at more than Rs. 400

(Darrah, 1898). As Dr. Arthur Neve observed in 1900, *'There are few countries in which the women carry so much of their property on their heads'* as they do in Ladakh (Neve, 1931). During the hottest months of summer, a large colored shawl was often worn instead of the Perak (Starr, 1924).

Buddhist nuns had their heads shaved and wore caps. They also draped sheepskins over their backs and wore long gowns, similar to men. The attire of the men of Gilgit and Baltistan consisted of trousers called *pyjamas* and a tunic called *choga*, which was sometimes secured with a *kamarband*. Women wore long, loose coats called *pirans* and trousers known as *suthan*. All these garments were made of *pattu,* a coarse woolen cloth. People of higher social status wore cotton shirts and drawers. The Baltis also carried a woolen blanket (Filippi, 1912). While the Baltis used a distinctive low-crowned hat made of *pattu* as headgear, the people of Gilgit wore a woolen bag about half a yard long, which was rolled upwards to form a tight-fitting cap. In some cases, the cap was adorned with two or three small square silk bags containing either charms or verses from the Quran. A turban was worn only by men of high social status.

Ornaments

The attire and jewelry of Dogra women reflect a vibrant cultural heritage and a deep appreciation for traditional craftsmanship. Traditionally, Dogra women wore a gown with a long, gathered skirt, often paired with a *chadar* or a long cloth to cover their heads. These garments were usually made of brightly colored muslin, highlighting their preference for elegance and vivid hues. A distinctive feature of their attire was the adornment of their foreheads with delicate ornaments that added grace to their appearance (Drew, 1875).

Kashmiri jewelry included necklaces, bracelets, anklets, rings, armbands, and amulets *(tawiz)*.[5] There has been significant Central Asian influence on Kashmiri jewelry, as seen in many other crafts of the valley (Sufi, 1979). This influence is believed to have introduced more delicate and intricate designs. The almond and cherry blossoms on silver headbands were delicately embossed, while silver bracelets were intricately chiseled with motifs of fish, birds, and flowers. Among the traditional jewelry items*, jhumkas* (bell-shaped earrings in gold or silver), as shown in Figure 1, featured small dangling drops forming a thick cluster. These earrings may have originated from Dogra jewelry, as evidenced in early paintings (Saraf, 1987).

Dogra women had a strong preference for elaborate personal adornments. They wore glass bangles, metallic earrings, nose rings, finger rings, necklaces, bracelets, and anklets. These jewelry pieces were carefully stored in a designated box, as depicted in Figure 2. Earrings were particularly striking, often long and intricate, resembling a 'well-fitted key-ring'. To enhance their facial beauty, women used *kohl* (a black powder made from lead ore) to darken their eyelids, a practice also extended to

Figure 1. Necklaces and rings.

children. Around their necks, they commonly wore silver or brass collars, often enameled in red or blue, as well as coral and silver bead necklaces (Figure 1). Massive silver bracelets, glass bangles, and rings set with agate or carnelian completed the ensemble of everyday jewelry for Kashmiri women (Kapur, 1992).

Dogra women wore gold *kenthas* and *haras* (chunky necklaces) (Figure 3), *gokhrus* (heavy bracelets), and *jhumkas* and *balis* (earrings) (Figure 4). They also wore an *arsi*, a large finger ring with a small embedded looking glass. Younger individuals adorned themselves with *tikkas* and *mathapattis* (forehead ornaments) (Figure 5). In addition to rings and bangles, *chowk,* a small dome-shaped head ornament, and a pair of fool (flower-shaped ornaments) worn beside the ears were significant Dogra ornaments, some of which are still worn by women in villages today. Each major town and village had its own goldsmith to cater to the jewelry needs of the people (Kapur, 1992).

Beyond the Pir Panjal range, adornments included carved amulets, brass buttons, and necklaces. Children sometimes wore necklaces made of large dried apricots and their kernels. The tradition of wearing ornaments is deeply rooted in Dogra culture, with jewelry being an integral part of their attire. Traditional Kashmiri *gani* is a wide choker necklace adorned with tiny, multicolored beads worn by women, this jewelry piece represents the region's rich cultural heritage (Figure 6). Even in modern times, jewelry designs have become more elaborate, featuring intricate decorations with enamel, gems, and pearls, often incorporating both precious and semi-precious stones (Filippi, 1912).

From the perspective of the Dogras, the *mangal sutra* holds unique significance as a symbol of marriage for Hindu women, as shown in Figure 7. Other common ornaments included the *tikka*, a forehead adornment that was often triangular or round in shape, tied with a black thread and secured at the back

Figure 2. Wooden jewelry box.

Figure 3. Necklace (*Haar*).

Figure 4. *Jhumka* figure.

Figure 5. Dogra women wearing *Jhumka* and *Tikka*.

with a hairpin. Gold earrings, known as *jhumkas* or *balis*, hanging elegantly from the ears, while the *nathani*, a large circular nose ring, was a defining feature of their jewelry. In addition to these adornments, silver anklets called *panzeb* and toe rings were commonly worn, further enhancing the richness of their traditional ensembles.

The silversmiths of Ladakh create exquisite silver jewelry in distinct local designs. Ladakhi women are often seen adorned with heavy jewelry, especially during festive occasions. The *perak,* a headpiece studded with turquoise, serves as their traditional festive headgear and symbolizes maturity (Filippi, 1912). Ladakhi women wore various garments but shared a deep appreciation for ornate accessories, including bangles, anklets, scarlets, necklaces, and earrings. Across these regions, jewelry and adornments not only enhanced physical beauty but also carried cultural and symbolic significance, representing social status, marital ties, and regional identity.

Figure 6. *Gani*.

Figure 7. Rings and ear rings.
Source: Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Shri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, and Directorate of Archive, Archaeology and Museum, Jammu and Kashmir, Jammu, collected by the author.

Dogra paintings depicting royal dresses

The clothing of the Dogra kings reflected their royal status, cultural richness, and lavish lifestyle. They dressed elegantly and traditionally in a distinctive manner. The primary garment was a knee-length *kurta*, paired with narrow ankle-length *pyjamas*. Over the *kurta,* they wore a coat, as depicted in Figure 8. The intricate gold craftsmanship on the coat highlighted their royal status and immense wealth. A belt-like accessory was worn around the *kurta* to enhance its appearance. Their attire also included jewelry, with long, exquisite necklaces made of precious metals and stones. The turbans worn by Dogra monarchs were unique, further signifying their royal identity. Gold ornaments added to their regal prestige. Paintings and engravings from that era vividly illustrate these costumes, capturing their intricate details and luxurious features. Beyond mere opulence, the clothing of Dogra monarchs symbolized authority, dignity, and cultural heritage.

The painting clearly depicts the Dogra kings wearing a colored *kameez* with a front opening. The red color of the shirt symbolized their readiness to sacrifice their lives for their land. Another type of garment was a well-fitted, collarless *kurta* with golden borders at the waist, as shown in Figure 9. Likewise,

Figure 8. Maharaja Ranbir Singh.

Figure 9. Maharaja Gulab Singh.

Maharajas were known to wear various styles of tunics. Several paintings also illustrate how Kashmiri kings wore more elaborate and ornate shirts or *kurtas* (Figure 10), highlighting their status in stark contrast to common men, who were depicted wearing simpler and more modest attire. People wore garments made of cotton, wool, or embroidered silk with necks, usually closed by gaily colored strings or buttons. They wore a pashmina belt around their waist (Figure 11).

Food under the Dogras

Food has always been an essential part of people's lives and has played a significant role in shaping their culture. Different countries have used and consumed various types of ingredients. Food habits were

Figure 10. Maharaja Pratap Singh.

Figure 11. Maharaja Hari Singh.
Source: Directorate of Archive, Archaeology and Museum, Jammu and Kashmir, Jammu, collected by Author.

another way in which people connected with their cultures or ethnic groups. Immigrants often used food to maintain their national identity. People from different cultures consumed a wide variety of foods. Different countries use distinct ingredients, cook and store food in different ways, and ate different types of food at various meals. A family's food preferences were influenced by where they lived and their ancestral origins. These preferences contributed to patterns in food choices within a cultural or regional group.

The Silk Road greatly enriched Kashmiri cuisine with aromatic spices from Central Asia and Persia. Cardamom, fennel, ginger, and saffron became prized ingredients, adding depth and fragrance to Kashmiri dishes. The Mughal Empire further influenced Kashmiri cuisine, fostering a fondness for meat dishes and introducing the rich, nuanced flavors of Mughal cooking. Kashmiri food held cultural significance, as it represented the people's heritage and identity. Traditional cooking skills, passed down through generations, reflected a deep connection with nature and a strong desire to preserve culinary traditions. Food was fundamental to Kashmiri social gatherings and festivities, fostering a sense of brotherhood and friendship. Whether at a bridal feast or a simple family supper, sharing food brought people together in joy and celebration (Kapur, 1992).

Food culture of Jammu

The Dogras of Jammu consumed a staple diet consisting of wheat, maize, and bajra. Their cuisine included a variety of traditional dishes that had been cherished for generations. One such dish was *Madra,* a rich, liquid-based preparation made with dry fruits, milk, and other ingredients, known for its heavy and nutritious nature. Dogras had a particular fondness for *Rajmash,* a dish prepared with a curd-based mixture, as well as *Auria* and Ambal. Among rice-based dishes, *Sripalau* and *Meat-Palau* held special significance. In community feasts, known as *Dhaam*, two commonly prepared dishes were *Mash ki Daal* and *Ambal* (Pathik, 1980). At such communal meals, food was traditionally served on large leaf platters made from lotus leaves or stitched together to form plates (*Pattals*) and bowls (*Doonas*). Invitees brought their own tumblers and *lotas* for the occasion. It was noteworthy that the hosts were typically dressed in clean attire, wearing dhotis and carrying towels over their shoulders as a mark of respect and tradition (Pathik, 1980).

Expert cooks were known as *Siyans,* meaning 'clean people'. They bathed before preparing meals and wore light, clean clothing. The dining area, usually set on the ground, was thoroughly cleaned and plastered with cow dung, with a border drawn to separate the space. Such meals were traditionally prepared for festivities and, occasionally, during *Shradhs* and *Chaubari*- the fourth anniversary of a person's death (Pathik, 1980). Interestingly, this death anniversary was celebrated rather than mourned, as it was believed that elderly individuals had experienced all the joys of life and should leave the world in happiness. A joyous farewell was given, often accompanied by music and a band. Relatives attended the occasion dressed in colorful attire, and community meals were served to them. Moreover, some individuals received token sums of money from the deceased's dependents as their share of the inheritance. However, despite this celebratory farewell, some close relatives still mourned the loss with deep grief and sympathy for the departing soul (Pathik, 1980).

Hindus believed that during an eclipse, toxic chemicals were expelled from the sun and moon, rendering food impure. As a result, they fasted during the eclipse and avoided consuming food prepared beforehand. They were highly particular about their dietary practices, strictly avoiding items they considered unclean or unholy. Since brass utensils could be thoroughly cleaned, they preferred cooking in them. In contrast, earthenware and china plates were used only once before being discarded, as they could not be washed adequately for complete purification (Kapur, 1992).

Rice, wheat, maize, and millet were the staple food items in Jammu Province. However, people primarily subsisted on rice wherever it was cultivated. Coarse millets formed a regular part of the diet for the poor. Maize, a highly favored grain across Jammu, was consumed consistently from September to May. Thereafter, wheat became available and served as the primary food source for the remaining six months.

Vegetables were also a common part of the diet. Curd was a popular food item among many, while the wealthy also enjoyed sweet meats with their meals. However, pickles and *murabbas* were more commonly consumed. The Dogras had a cultural prejudice against onions and carrots, although garlic was used without objection. Turmeric was widely used as a spice, and with growing prosperity, its consumption increased even further (Khan, 1999).

Jammu's diet was characterized by a distinct categorization of food into two types: *Pacca Khana* (Pakki Rasoi) and *Kacha Khana* (Kachi Rasoi). *Pacca Khana* referred to food prepared by frying in ghee, while *Kacha Khana* consisted of food that was not subjected to such treatment. This distinction reflects the

traditional culinary practices of the region and the emphasis placed on preparation methods. Dogra food habits were simple yet deeply connected to the climatic and geographical conditions of the area. In the plains, where agriculture thrived, Dogras ware predominantly vegetarian. In contrast, those living in the mountainous regions tended to consume non-vegetarian food, shaped by the availability of resources in their rugged environment. These geographical influences created noticeable differences in the food preferences of urban and rural Dogras; however, their cuisine retained a shared cultural essence, (Wakhlu, 1998).

Typical Dogra cuisine consisted of flavorful dishes deeply rooted in tradition. *Mithe Chawal* was a popular sweet rice dish, prepared by frying rice in a small quantity of oil or ghee, adding water and yellow food coloring, and sweetening it with sugar. Cooking it on a low flame yielded soft, fragrant rice with a mild sweetness. Another cherished dish was *Kheer* or *Shree Palov*, made by frying basmati rice in ghee and boiling it in milk with cinnamon and *choti elaichi*. This dish was slowly cooked until it thickened, resulting in a creamy, aromatic dessert, often served during festive occasions.

Staple preparations such as *Khamira* and *Pathoru* involved wheat flour leavened with yeast, left to ferment, and then cooked, forming a distinctive part of the Dogra meal. Seasonal delicacies like *Charolian* and *Chilli* delicacies were particularly enjoyed during the monsoon season. *Ambal*, a pumpkin-based dish, was a staple at ceremonies and religious gatherings, adding a traditional touch to communal feasts. Another regional specialty was *Kalari*, a unique milk-based preparation from the Udhampur district, renowned for its rich flavor and texture. This dish was so prized that it was sought after even by NRIs with ties to the Duggar region (Wakhlu, 1998).

Dogra cuisine was deeply intertwined with the region's traditions and lifestyle, blending simplicity with diverse flavors and preparation methods. Whether it was enjoyed as daily sustenance or during special occasions, Dogra food reflected the cultural identity and culinary ingenuity of its people (Figure 12).

Food culture of Kashmir

The origins of Kashmiri cuisine could be traced back to ancient times when rice was the staple diet of the valley's inhabitants. The significance of rice and greens in Kashmiri cuisine was reflected in the proverb *'haakh-batta'*, which translates to 'greens and rice'. Rice cultivation thrived in the valley, not only sustaining the local population but also laying the foundation for the cuisine as it was know today. During this period, there was little change in the eating habits of the average person. While rice remained the primary source of nutrition, people also consumed wheat, barley, maize, and several other grains (Lawrence, 1895).

People living in the Kashmir Valley mostly ate rice. Wheat flour and lentils, which had previously been consumed only in very small amounts, started to be taken more often as the Kashmiris and Punjabis became more connected. People in the area around Dal Lake often used flour made from *Singharas*, or

Figure 12. Necklace and amulets.

Figure 13. Samovar.

water chestnuts, (Kapur, 1992). In the hills, mostly maize and wheat, were commonly grown and at higher altitudes, buckwheat and barley were cultivated (Neve, 1915).

Kashmirs' ordinary meals were very simple. They boiled rice, made it into balls,and swallowed it. Rice, which was colored turmeric, was highly cherished (Hassan, 2014; Lawrence, 1895). The use of turmeric as a spice, in fact, steadily increased among the Kashmiris. Formerly, its use among peasants had been almost unknown. Ghee was not used much as Kashmiris find that it irritated their throats. They cooked their food using vegetable oils (Lawrence, 1895). Fruits were a vital part of the valley's diet, consumed by both rich and poor. Common varieties included apples, pears, apricots, grapes, cherries, mulberries, walnuts, etc. (Government of Jammu & Kashmir, 1890).

Tea was the most popular drink among Kashmiris. Initially considered a luxury, it gradually became a necessity by the end of the period under study. Bread, particularly, *kulchas*[6]*s* also became a common accompaniment to tea. When prepared without milk and with a slightly salty taste, it was called *kahwa*. The Russian samovar,[7] as shown in Figure 13, was widely used for its preparation (Kapur, 1992).

In the past, guests were given *baqir khani or kulcha*, high-quality baked goods. However when restaurants and candy shops opened in the city, people slowly began to change the way they ate. It was no longer possible for the wealthy to treat their guests with traditional sweets. The fact that European bakers were present in the city was considered very annoying, as shown by the fact that cakes, cookies, pastries, and other baked goods were found in many Kashmiri households. English baked goods were increasingly used in special events in Srinagar (Khan, 1999).

The water nut, or *singhara*, ground into flour and made into bread, was a staple in the diet of the *Hanjis*, who lived along the margins of Dal, Nigeen, and Anchar lakes. Fortunately for such poor communities, nature was often bountiful in Kashmir. However, the Dogra rulers imposed a heavy tax on *singhara*, making it a significant source of revenue for the government (Wakefield, 1943). It was considered state property, and the nuts were harvested annually and sold to the *Hanjis* at exorbitant rates (Schonberg, 1853). Given these harsh conditions, it is no surprise that Robert Thorp finds the *Hanjis* living in misery. He described their cottages as 'windowless, fireless, lightless, and bare' (Thope, 1868). Tea was highly valued by Kashmiris, both rich and poor. In the markets of Srinagar, two varieties-*Surati tea* and *Sabzi tea*—were widely available. Tea reached Srinagar from three main sources: Bombay tea imported from China, hill tea from Kangra in Punjab, and green tea brought from China via Lhasa and Ladakh (Lawrence, 1895).

Migration, invasion, and cultural exchange played a significant role in shaping Kashmiri culinary traditions during the medieval period. During Timur's invasion of India in the 14th century, skilled craftsmen, including cooks, were brought to Kashmir from regions such as Samarkand. The forefathers of the *Wazas*,[8] renowned master chefs, contributed to the evolution of Kashmiri cuisine through their expertise. According to Lawrence (1895), the typical daily meal of Kashmiris was neither representative of their culture nor reflective of their refined taste. However, when the services of a professional cook (*Waza*)

were sought for festive occasions, a distinct sense of culinary artistry was displayed in the preparation and arrangement of dishes. It was only during special occasions that ghee or fat was extensively used in mutton and vegetable preparations—a practice that continues to this day (Lawrence, 1895). Historically, Kashmiri Pandits observed fasting twice a month. On these days, they consumed only a small amount of flour made from *gair* (water chestnut),[9] known as *gairwavgr*a or *phalhar* (Bates, 1873). According to Bates, *phalhar* was the term used by the Pandits themselves to describe this simple dish (Bates, 1873).

Maharaja Pratap Singh's food and drinking habits

Mahraja Pratap Singh, described as a voracious eater, enjoyed forty dishes on his table. He relished leavened *roti* and would also eat *puri* and rice. His meal was extremely rich, and he consumed an abundance of cream, curds, and pickles. He ate his midday meal between 1:00 and 2:00. Around five o'clock in the afternoon, he used to take roughly a glass of milk and various fruits. He had his dinner late at night, about two o'clock. He ate flesh in his youth but stopped after being advised by his physician, Hakim Mahdi. Colonel Hugo operated on him to treat cancer. But he was so fixated on his *huqqa* that two hours after the chloroform, he called for it and smoked it, seemingly without any side effects. He would get up at eight in the morning. He drank no *lassi* or buttermilk. He didn't drink any tea during the hot heat. He abstained from food during the day on an occasion of public or private mourning, instead had fruits and light dishes (Sufi, 1949).

Food culture of Ladakh

In Ladakh, the main staples of food were wheat, barley, and girm. The barley meal was either made into broth or a dough that was mixed with buttermilk. *Chhang*, an alcoholic liquor made from girm or barley, was also widely drank. Even at funerals, the Ladakhis consumed it along with *Sattoo*, or girm-derived flour (Shakspo, 2010). However, the Muslims of Skardu Tehsil, who were primarily *Shias,* abstained from drinking. They, like the rest of the Baltistan population, were heavy smokers. Aside from the *Hookah*,[10] they had a ingenious method of smoking. They formed a little mound of earth and used their fingers to make a hole in the top. The lateral tunnel was then drilled using a tiny stick. They drew the smoke down the tunnel while bending down and pressing their lips against the aperture (Norris, 1932).

Tea was, nonetheless, the stable drink of Ladakh. The tea leaves, brought from China through Tibet, were boiled thrice to produce the beverage. After the third boiling, the cooking pot, now containing merely a little volume of the concentrated liquid together with the leaves, was filled to the brim with hot water. The liquid was allowed to simmer for an extended duration before the leaves were filtered out. The contents were thereafter poured into a large wooden churn. Butter was added into the product, which was subsequently churned with a small amount of salt and possibly soda. Thus, prepared tea and barley meal were basic diet for the Ladakhi people. Meat was taken by a select few who could afford it (Gompertz, 2000).

Food culture of Gilgit

In general, the people of Gilgit consumed meat, vegetables, and coarse grains as their primary sources of nutrition. Rice and wheat flours were taken only when readily accessible. In other instances, they took things like corn, girm, porcelain, and so on. Fruits such as mulberry, apricots, and other similar fruits were also consumed in large quantities, particularly during the winter months of scarcity. The dry mutton, locally known as *Nishallo*, was stocked to be consumed in the winter season. In addition, fish was also consumed; however, those who belonging to the upper classes did not eat it as the odor of fish was distasteful. (Schonberg, 1853).

The people of Gilgit also drank a large amount of tea. They had a custom of burying ghee in the ground for at least five years. The buried ghee was brought out at weddings, funerals, and other important events after being to have improved over time. It was also used to treat various illnesses. Apricots

were eaten both fresh and dried. After harvesting the fruits, it was traditional to split the stones and consume the kernels. A lot of oil was also taken from the kernels (Schonberg, 1853).

Vegetables and non vegetables under the Dogras

Vegetables, including cabbages, turnips, radishes, lettuces, spinach, cucumbers, and many other species, were abundant and widely consumed. The leaves of dandelion, plantain, and numerous other plants were cooked into soups, and walnut catkins were used as food, seasoned with a little salt, mustard, and walnut oil (Duke, 1910). People also consumed the lotus stem after boiling and seasoning it. It was pale green in color, cylindrical in shape, and approximately ten inches long and wide, called *nadru*,[11] and was considered healthy. In winter, both Hindus and Muslims ate a large number of turnips *gogij*[12] (Duke, 1910; Bates, 1873). During the cold in Srinagar, dried fruit (*hokh phal*) and dried vegetables were large parts of the diet (Bates, 1873). Clarified butter (*ghee*) was not much eaten, as Kashmiris found that it irritated their throats. Salt was also a principal article of food, as people liked their food very salty (Lawrence, 1895). There were two types of salt. One was the better-quality salt from Punjab, liked by the people, the other was of low quality and came from Ladakh (Lawrence, 1895).

Both Muslims and Hindus ate the meat of sheep and goats, and they also ate fish. Hindus ate the eggs of wild birds and lake birds, but avoided domestic eggs, garlic, and onions (Lawrence, 1895). Sir Walter Lawrence, in the *Valley of Kashmir*, recorded an interesting observation: *'Hindus in Kashmir would only eat birds if they were prepared in a manner similar to that of Muslims. Beef was nearly impossible to obtain, as killing a cow was considered a religious offense by the Sikhs and a capital crime under the Dogra rulers'* (Lawrence, 1895). Meat was a luxury, however, poultry—fowls, ducks, and geese was abundant, and ordinary peasants took fowls about six times and mutton five times a month. Chicken and eggs were off-limits to Hindus (Kapur, 1992).

On fast days in 1899, the Pandits were observed eating *ganhar*, veggie marrows, and red pepper without any problems. It's also interesting to note that Kashmiri Pandits who used to avoid vegetables like tomatoes, carrots, red beans, and the red-fleshed Kabuli veggie marrow, eventually overcame their dislike to these foods (Lawrence, 1895).

The Hindus of Kashmir did not eat garlic, onions (Saraf, 1987), and red colored vegetables, such as tomatoes, carrots, and red beans. Kashmiris believed that all grains made the body either hot or cold when they were eaten. Therefore, they were particularly concerned about consuming different kinds of grains, vegetables, and fruits at the same time. They thought that eating dried apples would make them cold, but they always boiled and ate them with amaranth flour, which made them hot (Kapur, 1992).

Wine

There were no liquor stores in the city until the Srinagar city distillery was established during Ranbir Singh's reign (Biscoe, 1922). Public opinion was strongly against alcohol consumption, and drunkards were universally despised. Although drinking was becoming increasingly common among Hindus and Muslims (Doughty, 1901), it was rare to see intoxicated individuals in public. Resolutions passed by the Srinagar municipality, *Anjumans*, and *Sabhas* from time to time expressed concern over growing intemperance, providing ample evidence that alcohol consumption had begun to rise. These resolutions also reflect anxiety over the population's increasing inactivity. In addition, a temperance society was found, though it lasted for only a short period.

Wine consumption was not a common practice among the inhabitants of Kashmir, most of whom were Muslim. However, over time, wine consumption became increasingly common, particularly among those residing in the city of Srinagar. In fact, during this period, the practice of drinking wine was rapidly replacing the old practice of consumption of bhang mixed with nuts (Kapur, 1992).

In Jammu, *bhang* and opium were common intoxicants. Rajputs and other Dogras often offered opium to guests on ceremonial occasions. Snuff was obtained from the province's hills. However, tobacco smoking became more widespread throughout the region. The consumption of free liquor among the lower classes also increased. In Ladakh, girm, or barley liquor known as *chhang*, was widely consumed (Kapur, 1992).

Conclusion

The Dogra dynasty embraced many exterior influences, but also preserved and institutionalized Kashmiri culinary and dress customs, ensuring their continuity. Food and clothes were important symbols of heritage and diversity in Jammu and Kashmir during the Dogra era (1846–1947). The cuisine of Jammu and Kashmir balanced simplicity and luxury. Jammu favored *madra, kaladi*, and *raajma*, while Kashmir Valley focused on meat-rich *wazwan*. Local ingredients and rituals blended religious and cultural influences. Similarly, attire reflected identity and prestige. Dogra dress symbolized status, while Kashmir's winter-ready clothing contrasted with Jammu's vibrant *pherans* and embroidered shawls. Pashmina and Kashmiri wool showcased local handicrafts. Punjabi, Central Asia, and Mughal influences enriched food and clothes, a dynamic cultural fusion while conserving local identity. Royal support has helped preserve these customs for future generations. The food and clothing of this era reflected a sense of unity in diversity, encompassing the plains of Jammu and Kashmir, whose food and clothes reflects the vibrant cultural history that defines Jammu and Kashmir today.

Notes

1. *Kangri*—A traditional Kashmiri portable firepot made of clay and wicker used to stay warm during the winter.
2. *Pheran*—A loose-fitting traditional woolen cloak worn in winter, often with a *Kangri* for warmth.
3. *Wazwan*—A traditional multi-course Kashmiri meal known for its rich mutton-based dishes.
4. *Palahru*—Traditional wooden footwear from Kashmir, cushioned with paddy grass, typically worn during winter.
5. *Tawiz* (amulet)—A charm containing Quranic verses or prayers, traditionally worn for protection and healing.
6. *Kulchas*—Traditional baked Kashmiri biscuits made from flour, ghee, and sugar, commonly served with Noon Chai.
7. *Samovar*—A copper or brass urn used for preparing and serving traditional Kashmiri teas like Kahwa and Noon Chai.
8. *Waza*—A highly trained chef who prepares *Wazwan*, regarded as an essential part of Kashmiri cuisine and culture.
9. *Gair*—(water chestnut), an aquatic fruit harvested in autumn and winter from Kashmir's lakes.
10. *Hookah*—A traditional water pipe used for smoking flavored tobacco (shisha), featuring a bowl, water chamber, hose, and mouthpiece.
11. *Nadru*—Lotus stem, a key ingredient in Kashmiri cuisine valued for its texture and flavor.
12. *Gogij*—Kahmiri turnip, widely used in winter cuisine across the region's households.

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A conceptualization of the research was carried out by the author, who also conducted an analysis of historical materials and investigated the cultural traditions of the Dogra Dynasty. Within the scope of this study, travelers account and secondary sources are utilized to analyze the impact that Dogra reign had on the cuisine and clothing of Jammu and Kashmir. A synthesis of the findings was performed by the author in order to emphasize the socio-cultural relevance of these traditions and their development during the Dogra rule, which reflects the uniqueness of the region.

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About the author

Hilal Ahmad Tantray is a Ph.D Scholar, Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India.

ORCID

Hilal Ahmad Tantray http://orcid.org/0009-0005-2813-6799

Data availability statement

This study is supported by historical documents, archival resources, and secondary sources that pertain to the culture of food and attire during the Dogra dynasty. All referenced materials are available in public archives and libraries. No new datasets were generated during the course of this research.

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